

GURU AMAR DASS

(The Architect of Sikh Culture)

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1

Brief Life Sketch of Guru Amardas (1479-1574)

A. Early Life :

Amardas was born in April 1479 at village Basarke in Amritsar district. His father was Tej Bhan, a *Khatri* of Bhalla tribe, and his mother was Bakht Kaur. Tej Bhan had four sons, the eldest being Amardas who married a lady named Mansa Devi at the age of twenty four. He carried on the profession of his father which was agriculture-cum-trade. Amardas was a zealous follower of the *Vaishnava* faith and he used to have a holy dip in the Ganges every year but he did not get spiritual solace. Once, while on his way back from the Ganges, he met a monk who became very intimate with him ; they moved and ate together. The monk one day, enquired from Amardas who his *Guru* was. Thereupon Amardas replied that he had none. Hearing this the monk

became exasperated and exclaimed that he had been defiled by the touch of a person who had no *Guru*. Saying this the monk left for the Ganges to wash away that sin. This gave a shaking to Amardas; he began to make search for a *Guru*.

B. Meeting the Gnru :

One morning while he was engaged in his meditation he heard the chanting of hymns by some person. It was Bibi Amro, the daughter of Guru Angad (Second Nanak) who was the wife of nephew of Amardas. Amardas approached Bibi Amro and enquired from her as to who the author of these hymns was. She told that these hymns were the composition of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion and that she got these from Guru Angad (Second Nanak) her father at Khadur Sahib. Amardas requested Bibi Amro to take him to Guru Angad, her father. Thus both proceeded to Khadur Sahib. On seeing Guru Angad, Amardas fell at the feet of Guru Angad in whom he found the *Guru* of his choice. He stayed at Kahdur Sahib.

C. Life of humble service of the Guru (1541—52)

Amardas served the Master with full devotion and strenuous discipline for eleven years. Everyday early in the morning he would go to the river Beas which was several miles from that place and bring water in a pitcher for the *Guru* to bathe. Besides that he would clean the utensils of the kitchen and do every kind of service to the *Guru* and the *Sangat*. Guru Angad set aside the claims of his own sons, Dasu and Datu, and appointed Amardas as his successor to the pontificate. He moved to Goindwal.

D. Main events of his pontificate : (1552—74)

1. Langar :

Guru Amardas continued the institution of *Langar* with a greater vigour and on a more extensive scale.

2. Collection of Hymns :

He collected the Hymns of Guru Nanak and Guru Angad and added to them Hymns composed by himself.

3. Manji System :

He organised Bishoprics at important places in the whole country.

4. Baoli :

He got constructed a *Baoli* at Goindwal which became a place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

5. Akbar's visit :

After a successful expedition on Chitor, Akbar paid a visit to the Guru; he was accompanied by a large escort. He had his meals in the *Guru Ka Langar*. Akbar granted some villages to Bibi Bhani, Guru's daughter. He remitted the whole land tax of the affected region by famine.

6. Pilgrim Tax :

The Guru went to Hardwar to propagate Sikhism at the time of a festival. All the followers of the Guru were exempted from the pilgrim's tax.

7. Passing into the Infinite (1574) :

The Guru passed into the Infinite in 1574. Setting aside the claims of his sons Mohri and Mohan to the *Gaddi*, he appointed Ram Das (Jehta), his son-in-law (husband of Bibi Bhani), as his successor. The line of successors in the same family runs as under :-

		Pontificate
Third Nanak, Guru Amardas		1552—74
Fourth Nanak, Guru Ram Das (Husband of Bibi Bhani),		
daughter of	Guru Amardas	1574—81
Fifth Nanak,	Guru Arjan Dev	1581—1606
Sixth Nanak,	Guru Har Gobind	1606—1645
Ninth Nanak	Guru Tegh Bahadur	1664—75
Tenth Nanak	Guru Gobind Singh	1675—1708

Latif, an eminent historian writes about Guru Amardas. "He was successful as a teacher and his zeal and activity in preaching, combined with his genial habits and disposition, secured for him many converts to the new faith."

(Latif : History of the Punjab p. 251)

2 Cultural anchorage

Guru Amardas provided a cultural anchorage to the new Sikh Society that was rising in India. The Sikh Society dissociated itself from the Hindu Society for the reason that it had adopted a different religion. The inevitable result of this was a transformation in its culture. The principles of this new culture were laid down by Guru Nanak but the institutions were given a practical and lasting shape by Guru Amardas, Third Nanak.

1. What is culture ?

“Culture is a sense of ultimate values possessed by a particular society which it has expressed in its collective institutions and which its individual members express in their dispositions, feelings attitudes and manners as well as significant forms which they give to material objects.”

2. Culture and Religion :

Culture of any community is its way of life ; as such it is based on certain principles. These principles are originally drawn

from the religious beliefs the community had had in the morning of its life, or re-interpretted later on by some scholars ; hence the importance of religion in tracing the basis of any culture : “The fundamental mode of cultural expression is derived from religious foundations of society.”¹ Culture is a long drawn out process ; it is not made or unmade in a few years. In development original content never vanishes completely. Although the culture comprises the social behaviour, customs, aesthetics and morals, but there may, at certain times, interpose some factors other than religious beliefs as the theories of art and economic and political organisations.

3. Culture and customs.

Culture of a group of people is usually traced from their customs. ‘Underneath the phenomenon of society lies a vast terra firma of custom ; it is a bed rock of time hallowed modes of thought.’ It provides to the society some strength, steadiness and stability that habit imparts to the individual and heredity and instinct provide to the species. Custom forms a groove along which thought and action move with mechanical automatism. It saves the mind, the labour of choosing between alternatives and making decisions at every step which may sometimes verge on perpetual hesitancy and mental quagmire. Thought and innovation are not undesirable but they are tolerated when re-adaptation becomes absolutely indispensable. To study a particular culture, therefore, we should turn mainly to custom and not to law.

Religion has three constituents : Theology, Ethics and Culture. Culture is determined by Theology and Ethics. Culture of one religious community differs from another because the basic principles of ethics and theology are different in different religions.

4. Dependence of culture on position of woman :

Culture depends upon the customs and social institutions and they in turn are primarily based upon the position of woman in society.

1. Collingwood.

Sayeth Guru Nanak :

“From the woman is our birth and in
the woman’s womb are we shaped,
To the women are we engaged, to the women
are we wedded.

The woman is our friend and from the woman
is our family.

If one woman dies—we seek another.

Through the woman are the bonds of the world”

(Asa-di-Var) p. 473

Guru Amardas, therefore started with the innovations in the culture by changing the status of women in the society.

5. Social status of woman and Guru Amardas :

Guru Nanak revolted against the injustice done to woman in Hindu society since times immemorial. Woman has been virtually a slave since the establishment of *Brahmin’s* dominance and enforcement of Manu’s Code. She has been regarded as a man’s shoe which is always under man’s feet. The *Rishis* and *Yogis* considered her as a source of allurements and thus of sin. For Manu her function is only reproduction. For a Rajput she had no right to live after the death of her husband. For a *Brahmin* she had no right to object to cowives. “The women are congenitally inferior to men in *Vedic* postulate. Woman’s status has been laid down as that of a triple and eternal subordination to man just as in Chinese Confucian culture, the identical concept *Tam Tong* indicates which means Three Woman’s Subordinations.”

In the sixteenth century Sikhs formed a new society having a basis quite distinct from that of Hindu organisation. They had a new religion, new social values, new customs and new institutions. With Guru Nanak’s teachings the woman felt a sigh of relief. The Sikh Doctrine brought a revolutionary change in her status. This is the significant part of the Sikh culture that distinguished it from Hindu culture. In Sikhism woman is not considered to be a source of sin, vice or dishonour as assumed by Manu, Buddhism and Christianity. She is not considered as a means of allurements of man towards vices. On the contrary,

through the institution of marriage, she helps in maintaining sexual discipline and establishing a morally healthy society. Our *Gurus* never favoured the life of a *Yogi* living far away from the villages and habitations.

(i) **Ardhangi :**

A woman is considered to be *Ardhangi* in Sikhism. "Woman is taken out of man ; not out of his feet to be trampled under feet, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm, to be protected and near his heart to be loved."¹

(ii) **Sati :**

Guru Amardas condemned the cruel custom of *Sati*—the selfimmolation of the wife after the death of her husband ; he carried crusade against it. He preached the re-marriage of the widow.

Spake Guru Amardas :

"A *Sati* is not one who burneth herself on the pyre of her spouse,

"A *Sati* is she who dieth with the sheer shock of separation.

A *Sati* is one who liveth contented and embellisheth herself with good conduct,

And cherisheth her Lord ever and calleth on Him each morn."

(Var Suhi, Shilok M. 3 p. 787)

(iii) **Purdah :**

In Hindu society the system of *Purdah* prevailed, which consisted in veiling woman's face from all men excepting her husband. Guru Amardas condemned it and carried a crusade against it. Sikh women, there after, began to work shoulder to shoulder with men and were freed from all shackles of slavery.. This made the nation strong.

1. Henry M.

3

Egalitarian Society

Sikhism laid the foundations of a new type of society in India till then quite foreign to her. The society founded was egalitarian in spirit and structure which was something un-Indian. The barriers of castes were dismantled by the creation of two institutions, *Sangat* and *Pangat*. Guru Amardas by concentrating on these, brought social equality in society.

I. Congregation (*Sangat*) :

It was an association of the pious Sikhs. Breaking with the Hindu tradition Sikhism was made a congregational religion. The Sikh temples were thrown open to men of all castes and creeds without any discrimination. It was made compulsory for all the Sikhs to come to the *Gurdwara*, the Sikh temple, daily in the morning and evening and join the congregation called *Sangat*. It met for religious purposes and also some times for discussion of matters of common interest. The Sikhs must sit together on the same floor without any seat being reserved for any body indicating

his caste status. Men of highest political status had to abide by this injunction. As a result of this, both the complexes, superiority as well as inferiority, vanished and the sense of equality began to grow. After the prayers sacred pudding (*Karah Prashad*) was distributed to all from the same container and by the same man who may belong to any caste. It was the order of the *Guru* that any body who came to attend the congregation must get the *Parshad*. This removed untouchability. So in this new society the Sikhs sat together, learned together and prayed together which was not found in Hindu society.

2. Community Kitchen (Pangat) :

Sangats were not merely places of worship but also way-side refectories which gave food and shelter to indigent wayfarers. So *Sangat* and *Pangat* went together. The *Sangats* run free kitchens where hundreds of the needy people get food daily. These kitchens were financed out of the offerings made by the Sikhs. It was the command of the *Guru* that who so ever came to have *Darshan* of the *Guru* must first have his meals from this free kitchen. Hamayun and Akbar had their meals from the *Langar* when they paid visits to the *Guru*. The common kitchens removed all caste prejudices because people of all castes dined, sitting side by side. There could be no untouchability under this system.

These institutions, of *Sangat* and *Pangat*, were of pivotal importance in the establishment of this new society of the Sikhs. These institutions continue upto this day. This was a revolt against compartmentalism created by the Hindu society.

4 Religious Ceremonies among Sikhs

Complexity of ceremony depends upon Ritualism; Ritualism has no place in Sikhism ; Guru Amardas dispensed with it:

A. What is Ritualism ?

Ritualism is worship of some divine power with the object of getting some super-natural power and not for union with God. A rite is considered as an end in itself; thus it is an idolatry. From Sikh point of view worshipping God as any thing but Spirit, is undesirable because such a worship cannot be called religion; it can be called white magic or accultism. In ancient religions, the rituals were very predominant. In historical times too we find religions full of rituals and in Hinduism they persist upto this day with greater force than they did in *Vedic* times, The rites tend to creep in gradually in every religion. Hebrew prophets were opposed to ritualism but the temple of Jerusalem became a centre of religious rites, ceremonials and blood sacrifices. The Christians have

followed in the footsteps of the Jews inspite of strong opposition by Christ. Since there is no place for idolatory in Sikhism, there is no place for ritualism.

B. Ritualism and priestly class

Rituals require some sort of organisation in which the priests dominate. The organised sacramentalism gives to the priestly class, a power which they use for individual gain; they begin to exact offerings from the people; they form a class on a national scale and try to protect their privileges by organised methods; they begin to dabble in politics of the country and snatch political power as is amply illustrated by the history of the Roman Church and *Brahminism*. Guru Nanak strongly condemn ritualism, idolatory and the priestly class. Among Sikhs any body can lead the service in the *Gurdwara*. There is no place for priests as a class in Sikhism.

C. Simplicity of Sikh ceremonies :

There are some simple ceremonies that are performed by Sikhs on different occasions; they all remind us of the Truth and Reality and the relation of man with God. The ceremonies are considered as a means to an end which is union of man's soul with God. On all occasions the Holy Scriptures contained in the *Adi-Granth* are recited; they are followed by prayers before God. Guru Nanak preferred Word to all rituals and sacraments. Words (*Shabada*) are considered to be the best symbols of the remembrance of God. A ritual or an image is liable to lead one astray. The ceremony is the same whether the occasion is the birth of a son, a marriage, a send off, a reception or death of some relative or a friend. After the recitation of the hymns, praises of God are sung, prayers are said, and then *Parsad* is distributed.

Hinduism prescribes most stupendous and complex body of rituals that has ever been elaborated by man. 'The domestic rites embrace the whole course of man's life, from his conception in the mother's womb upto his death, or rather beyond it, as several ceremonies refer to the departed souls.' The conventional rites are as many as forty.

D. Guru Amardas and social ceremonies :

Bannerjee, an eminent historian, writes about the contribution of Guru Amardas in this field as under :—

“The change, Guru Amardas, desired to introduce in the very important ceremonies connected with marriage and death, struck at the very root of the influence of the priestly class, and though in such a matter, where long standing customs and cherished practices are concerned, success must necessarily have been slow, the ball had been set rolling and Sikhism put on the way of gradual dissociation from Hinduism and consolidation into a separate sect.”

(i) Marriage ceremony :

Guru Amardas changed the marriage ceremony that was practised by the Sikhs. Till that the ceremony followed was that of Hindus which consisted in finding the auspicious moment for marriage according to the position occupied by planets that control the lives of the boy and the girl to be married. Then there were seven circumambulations around a *Havan*. Guru Amardas did away with the auspicious moments; for the Sikhs all moments are equally auspicious; finding auspicious moments is a mere superstition.

The Sikhs were simply to recite the Scriptures and have four circumambulations around the Scriptures. The ceremony was thus simplified.

About this change, eminent historian Bannerjee remarks :—

“The Sikh epithalamium, the *Lawan*, which is said to have been composed by Guru Ram Das at the time of his own marriage, is another departure from the Hindu social practices. This hymn may or may not have been written on the occasion of Guru's own marriage, but that hardly affects the significance. It clearly appears that the *Guru* was commenting on a custom already in existence and we may as well accept the Sikh tradition that the change had been introduced by his predecessor Guru Amardas.”¹

1. Bannerjee : Evolution of the Khalsa pp. 181-82

(ii) Death ceremony :

Before passing into the Infinite Guru Amardas left instructions with regard to the ceremonies to be performed after his demise.

“After my death sing God’s praises.

Call God instead of a Pandit and

Read God’s Word instead of *Garar Puran*.

Read God’s Word, hear God’s Name.

The Guru desireth God’s Love instead of a lofty bier etc.

The True Guru spoke as it pleased God,

And he was blended with the Omniscient Being.”

(Ramkali Sadd.)

The Guru thus desired to dispense with the Hindu ceremonies and adopt the new simple practice of remembering God and none else at the time of death.

(iii) Birth :

In *Brahminism* there are seven ceremonies connected with the birth of a child, right from conception to the tonsure of child’s head. All these were dispensed with. They were replaced by only one ; it was a recitation of Sikh Scriptures and thanks giving to God.

5 New Bonds of Union (Fraterinisation)

Having laid down the foundations of a new culture according to the new religious doctrine given by Guru Nanak, Guru Amardas separated Sikhs from Hindus; and then he needed new bonds of union among the members of the new Sikh society that was emerging. This could be done by increasing the gatherings of Sikhs. Since the means of transport and communication were very scanty in those days the only chance of their meeting was at the pilgrim places and festivals. Guru Amardas constructed a *Baoli* at Goindwal having 84 steps. The Guru declared that whoever would have a dip in the *Baoli* and recite Hymn of Meditation (*Japji*) at each step, he would be saved from the wanderings in the womb and be emancipated.

Thus the *Baoli* became the first place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. The Guru invited all his followers to visit the place twice a year *i.e.* at the time of *Baisakhi* and *Diwali*. This enabled the Sikhs to frateranise with one another and become compact body of people having brotherly feelings. These pilgrim places became one of the factors that created a sense of Nationality among the Sikhs.

Social Idealisation and Guru Amardas

A. What is Social Idealisation ?

‘Man is a social animal’, said Aristotle ; ‘he must live in society ; in dealing with the activities of man this fact must never be ignored; a religion can never be purely individualistic.’

B. Guru Nanak and Social Idealisation :

Guru Nanak Dev laid more emphasis on social aspect of religion than it had ever been done by *Brahmins*, the leaders of Hindu society in India or the previous reformers of it. He had told the *Yogis* categorically that they should come out of their hilly or forest hideouts, live among the people, guide them and help them in their troubles, for salvation by *Yoga* is not the real goal of man’s life ; the *Yogi’s* life is an attempt at escape which is an act of cowardice. The *Yogis*, he said, were too individualistic and selfish ; their life was unnatural and unreal. No human being

can see the neighbour dying ; he must come to his help. Renowned historian Toynbee observes that, 'a liberated individual, the deified man must revert to the world and society to participate in its activities ; he is not to become a recluse and burden on others.'

The stone hearted *Yogis* saw a common man reeling under the tyrannous rule of the Turkish kings in India, but they sat in their hideouts quite satisfied, unconcerned and secure. Social idealisation has always been ignored by *Yogis*, *Bhaktas* and *Rishis* who lived away from all habitations. This had led to the degeneration of Indian society in general ; a common man can never pardon these so called lighthouses inaccessible to them. Guru Nanak sowed the seed of social idealisation. The seed sprouted ; it was watered and manured by his successors and raised into a healthy plant. Guru Nanak was a practical man and not a mere dreamer. He was not as otherworldly as other *Bhaktas* were. He wanted to establish a social order of house holders, believing in Unity of God and Brotherhood of Man. He gave the new principles of egalitarianism conspicuous by their absence in caste-ridden and polytheistic society of India. We must study the social significance of the teachings of Guru Nanak and the emphasis laid down by his successors on it. Guru Nanak was not only a *Bhakta* of the traditional cults as of Kahir, Ramanand and others but something more. He was not merely a reformer but a revolutionary in his ideas. He did not set up a mere sect but founded a new religion. He gave a new social order, with new principles and new social institutions in rudimentary form, thus laying the foundations of a new people.

"From the outset Sikhism stood distinguished from other reform movements by its reconciliation with secular life."¹

"Other reformers perfected the form of dissent rather than planting the germs of a Nation ; Their sects remain to this day as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay the foundations on which Guru Gobind Singh erected a Nation."²

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1. Narang G.C. Transformation of Sikhism p. 13
 2. Cunningham : History of Sikhs.

Spake Guru Nanak :

“Some there are who repair to woods composed in silence.

Some suffer pangs of wintery forests and freeze themselves
like snow.

Some besmear their bodies with ashes
and cleanse them not,

Some keep their hair matted to look wild and different
from fellow beings.

Some wander about naked, they sleep not and
doze not,

Some burn themselves in fire, limb by limb, and thus waste
themselves away.

Without the Lord's Name, their bodies are
reduced to dust.”

(Malhar M. 1.) p. 1284 A. G.

C. Udasis and Guru Amardas :

Guru Nanak had condemned asceticism and renunciation of the world. Sri Chand, son of Guru Nanak, had leanings towards renunciation. Guru Nanak, thus, did not give *Gur-Gaddi* to him. Sri Chand founded a sect of his followers ; these people discarded comforts and pleasures of the world and led an unmarried life. This sect was called *Udasi* sect. The *Udasis* were akin to prevailing Hindu beliefs ; the Sikhs must dissociate themselves from them so that they might not relapse into Hinduism.

Guru Amardas, on assuming the charge of Sikh Society authoritatively declared that the active and domestic Sikhs are wholly separate from the passive and recluse *Udasis*. He actively preached in favour of common house holder's life. On resuming the *Guru-ship* he at once sent circulars to the Sikhs not to follow *Udasis* who claimed to be Sikhs under the lead of Sri Chand.

“Thus Guru Amardas preserved the infant faith from disappearing as one of the many sects that had arisen and vanished within the fold of Hinduism.”¹

1. Cunningham : History of Sikhs

“The Sikhs were thus separated from the *Udasis* and raised above asceticism ; they were free and fit to follow the course of national progress.”¹

“This gave the Sikhs something of a social character. There was a gradual drifting away from the orthodox Hindu societies and attempts were made through innovation to bring into existence a new brotherhood social as well as religious, self sufficient and independent.”²

“Thus the pontificate of Guru Amardas was a turning point in the history of Sikh Church...His achievement was that he constructed a fence around the plant that germinated, lest it should be destroyed by the gale of all consuming Hindu social practices. The plant got an opportunity to grow and fructify.”³

D. Theory of Ashrama Dharma :

Ashram Dharma theory of dividing man's life into four stages was rejected and in its place a healthy psychological readjustment with man's environments within the household life was preached and emphasised by the *Guru*. *Sanyas Ashram* and *Van Parastha Ashram*, were dispensed with ; man must work for whole of his life according to the amount of energy he possesses and live a family life. It was emphasised that he can lead a life of real *Sanyas* among the members of his family can contribute his mite till the end and never become a parasite and burden on society.

So during the pontificate of Guru Amardas the Sikhs changed their ideal of life altogether. They renounced renunciation, earned their living, led a social life and supported themselves and other needy persons by their service. Earth—consciousness and God-consciousness were synthesised ; pessimism was blown off; a happy and contented life was idealised. Never before on the soil of India, for centuries at a stretch, had such a complete metamorphosis taken place that could ultimately transform jackals into lions, who faced ferocious invaders from the West, and that could embolden sparrows to face foreign falcons without themselves becoming professionally aggressive. This was the new dimension that was provided to religion, by domesticating it.

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1. Narang G.C. Transformation of Sikhism
 2. Bannerjee : Evoluation of the Khalsa p. 123.
 3. Chhabra, G.S. Advanced History of the Punjab p. 142.

Church Organisation

In nonsecular world, Church Organisation becomes a necessity because the governments are usually theocratic. To fight against injustice and tyranny of the ruling party two things are needed : organisation and physical force. Without organisation the physical force can not be properly and effectively utilised because the people form simply a crowd. This organisation lays down rules about the rights of membership, the mutual relations of the members and methods of struggle.

A. Bishoprics (*Manjis*) and Decentralisation :

Guru Amardas decentralised the Sikh organisation. The Sikhs were scattered over whole of the country and they could not meet their *Guru* often. Guru Amardas established separate centres, each under the charge of a devout Sikh appointed by the *Guru*. Twenty two centres were created for this purpose ; each was called a *Sangat* or a *Manji* (Bishopric). The Sikh incharge of the *Manji* collected the offerings of the Sikhs of his area and sent these to the *Guru*. This system was perfected by Guru Arjan Dev. This devout Sikh began to be called a *Masand*.

“The well knit organisation of the *Sangats*, not only kept the Sikhs together and in touch with their leader, but also provided them with funds necessary for common purposes and familiarised them with a kind of self government, however imperfect it might have been.”

“The Sikhs were gradually accustomed to a kind of government of their own and thus began to feel themselves as a firmly organised and strong party within the State.”¹

The Guru began to be called a *Sachha Patshah*, True Guru. In the opinion of some, ‘The result of *Masand* system was that a state, peaceful and unobtrusive had been slowly evolved’² and “the Sikh community had come to acquire the position of an *imperium in imperio*; they had a separate polity within the Mughal empire.”³

B. Sikh State :

But the Sikhs had no motive of having a separate State till 1606. Only the circumstances after that compelled them to think in these terms. Sikhism was a challenge to *Brahminism*. The Mughals on religious ideology had nothing to say against the Sikhs but they began to feel a danger to their political power. Hindus had no organisation where all could meet together ; they provided no threat to Muslim State. Originally the Sikhs were considered to be a part of Hindu society but the new reforms changed them into a separate community or nationality. The Mughal rulers scented a threat to their political supremacy, in the future. So *Brahmins* and Mughal rulers combined together to nip Sikhism in bud which was considered as an evil. Sikh society became a religio-political society after the execution of Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Nanak. The religious policy of Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb compelled them to do that.

1. Trump.

2. Narang G.C. Ibid

3. Bannerjee Ibid

8

Scriptures of Guru Amardas

(ANAND)

The contribution of Guru Amardas towards the Sikh Scriptures is very substantial. He has composed 874 *Shabadas* and *Slokas*. Of all his *Banis*, *Anand Sahib* is the most conspicuous. It is recited every day in all the *Gurdwaras* and on all occasions, by *Sangats* and individuals. Its title is *Anand* (Bliss) ; it explains what Bliss is. Guru Amardas composed this *Bani* when the Sikhs congratulated the *Guru* on getting a grandson. Through this *Bani*, the *Guru* explained to the Sikhs that the pleasure realised on a union with God is immensely superior to the pleasure that one gets at the time of a birth of a child.

Spake Guru Amardas :

“I am in perfect Bliss as I have realised
the True Lord.

He can be realised through Equipoise ;
this fills the mind with joy

Music of the Holy Word rings in our ears.
 So remember Him and sing His praises,
 Says Nanak, 'I am in perfect Bliss as I have realised the
 True Lord.'

So the method of getting Bliss lies in singing the praises of God and this depends upon the Grace of the *Guru*.

A. Nature of pleasure :

Every man in this world seeks pleasure ; no body wants pain ; but the pleasure man is after, should be a lasting one. It is no use hankering after a pleasure which is momentary and which ends in pain ; the sensual pleasures are pleasures of this type ; they are transitory and are subject to the Law of Diminishing Satisfaction. One object of pleasure stops giving pleasure after some time and man wants to switch over to some other. Getting the new object he faces the same situation after sometime. He goes on changing the objects of pleasure till he finds himself in the state of ennui when he begins to feel bore and wretched. The source of everlasting pleasure is realisation of God. It is spiritual pleasure—a Bliss.

B. What is Bliss :

"God is verily Bliss ; man verily is Blissful by getting this Bliss. Who would have lived, who would have breathed if this infinite expanse of Bliss were not there ?"¹

Bliss is not to be confused with the happiness that a man experiences when in contact with an agreeable sense object. Worldly pleasure is but an infinitesimal part of the Bliss of God. In the Bliss there is an absence of sorrow. Anything that is not God is full of suffering. The self is free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst, imagining nothing but what it ought to imagine and desiring nothing but what it ought to desire."²

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1. Taittiriya Upanisada
 2. Maitrayani Upanisada VI

Bliss (*Anand*) is the highest state of existence and experience where man is not conscious of jarring dualities. It is the experience of peaceful contentment born out of perfect balance. It is the fulness. It can be compared to Hegel's Absolute 'which includes and transcends every known aspect of Reality and which is not exhausted by anyone of these.' In this state of mind the contrast between pain and pleasure is avoided. In it man integrates his impulses and desires with all that is true, good, and beautiful. It is the state of 'Perfect' *Sahaj*."

The nature of Bliss differs from a physical and sensual pleasure. Ordinary pleasure is lost in colour, smell or petals of flowers. In Bliss it is the inner *Anubhava* that enters the very nature of the thing and feels quite at home with it because there is no difference between it and the object ; there is no estrangement. It is an experience which transcends an ordinary experience; it makes the individual feel enlarged and have a quality of absolute-ness and perfection which is absent in every day human affairs. In such a state the distinction between the qualities and the bearer of qualities, God and His attributes is lost. Then God is *Wismad* (Bliss) and the Self is *Wismad* ; thus all the three merge into the state of *Wismad*.

Spake Guru Nanak :

"Of unparalled Beauty is He, the Embodiment of Bliss,

And He is seen by the Perfect Guru's Grace."¹

"On meeting with the *Guru* man is rid of his doubt,
And he becometh the Embodiment of Bliss of unparallel-
ed Beauty unperceivable."²

By meditating on the Name of God and singing His praises, a man gets Bliss. Why ? Because God Himself is Bliss. God is Beauty ; His manifestation is Beauty par excellence. On seeing it man experiences a wonderment of the highest intensity called Bliss (*Wismad*). By meditation man becomes one with God and himself becomes perfect joy.

1. A.G. p. 1047.

2. A.G. p. 1042.

SOME SELECTIONS

1. "Mind, thou art the image of Light,
Recognise thy essence." (Asa M. 3) P. 441
2. "And through the Lord's Grace, one enjoyeth the Bliss
of Equipoise,
Yea, they who are imbued with the Name always love
the Truth." (Asa M. 3.) P. 424
3. "Everyone utters the Name of the Lord,
But through utterance, one mounts not to One's
God.
When by the Guru's Grace, the Lord is enshrined in
the mind,
Yea, then alone one gathers the Fruit." (Gujri M. 3) P. 491
4. "Many ceremonies are practised,
But without the Name of the Lord, they are but woe
and egotism.

One is bound by the fetters of *Maya*,
 He can procure release only by the Light of the *Guru*,
 sayeth Nanak.” (Gauri M. 3.)

5. “The whole universe is epitomised in our body.”
 (Suhi M. 3). p. 754

6. “O, my body, Lord put the Light in thee,
 So, thou came into the world.”
 (Ram Kali M. 3) p. 921

7. “There is but one Word uttered by thy only *Guru*,
 So reflect on His Word alone.

True is this store—house of knowledge, true are its
 wares, the jewels found in it.

It is by the *Guru's* Grace that we are blest with the
 Word.” (Sorath M. 3) p. 646

8. “Without the Word, the whole world wandereth
 about,

And wastes away the opportunity of life.

Nanak, the Word is the only Nectar; through the *Guru*
 is it received.” (Sorath M. 3.) p. 644

9. “Bride and groom are not they who pose as one
 whole.

Bride and groom are they who are two bodies and one
 soul.” (Suhi M. 3) p. 788

10. “O my mind, a person whom the *Guru* enlightens
 remains a house holder without being attached.

He leads a life of truth, of right actions and of controll-
 ed desire.” (Sri Rag M. 3) p. 788

11. “Come, ye, loved disciples of *Guru*,
 sing ye the True Word,
 Yea, sing ye, the Word of the *Guru*
 which is the most sublime of all.

They on whom is the Lord's Grace, cherish it in
 the mind,

So drink—in ye the Lord's Nectar and be ever imbued
 with His Love,

And dwell on the Lord, the support of the earth.”

Sayeth Nanak :

“Always sing the True Word.”

(Ram Kali M. 3) p. 920

12. “Every one sayeth, “I am in Bliss,” but Bliss cometh
from the *Guru*,

One knoweth Bliss ever from the *Guru* when the Loved
Lord is in mercy.

In His Mercy, the Lord dispelleth an evil and blesses us
with the collyrium of wisdom.

They who have become detached in the mind, their
Word the True One embellisheth.

Sayeth Nanak :

“This is the Bliss which one knoweth from the *Guru*.”

(Ram Kali M. 3) p. 917

